6: Tomasic E-4 (1947-1948) 1953 RF1 Great Russia RF1
[XI century]

and hence, no group support could be found if a leader had attempted to form a centralized political authority or an imperial system over the whole area. The old Russian Chronicle of Kiev (12th century) describing a tribe with such a culture (the Polians) states that among them each kindred group (*rod*) lived in its own separate locality and had its own government.[4]

In a like manner, principles of dignity and moderation, as well as personal autonomy and lack of coerciveness, prevailed in family relations of these people. The Chronicle, for instance, states:

> The Polians had customs of their fathers, customs mild and peaceful (*krotok i tikh*); they showed a kind of reserve (*stydenie*) towards their daughters-in-law (*snokha*) and their sisters, towards their mothers and their parents, towards their fathers-in-law and their brothers-in-law; to all of the persons named they showed great reserve. They had marriage cusoms: the bridegroom did not go to seek his bride; she was taken to him in the evening, and the following morning they brought what belonged to her (*chto vdaduche*).[5]

It appears that the family organization of the Polians rested on mutual respect of all family members; that the bride brought the dowry which remained her personal property; that she might have had the initiative in wooing. This contention is supported by other evidence. Cosmas Pragensis, for instance, speaking of the old Bohemian Slavs, states: "It is not the men who choose the maids, but the maids themselves who take the husbands they like, and when they like."[6] A French writer who visited Ukraine in the seventeenth century wrote: "In Ukraine, contrary to the customs of all other nations, the husbands do not choose their wives, but are themselves chosen by their future consorts."[7]

There is also other evidence concerning some matriarchal traits of the early Slavs.[8] Throughout ages, women of the plains betwen the Dnieper and the Volga maintained property rights over their dowries and also over income from vegetables, poultry, dairy products and yarn that they produced and sold, though such rights were not recognized to men.[9] Although a woman in Russia did not have any claim to the property of her father or her brother, and only a limited right to that of her husband, she had the privilege, denied to a man, of saving and building up a

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562 *korobka* (chest) of her own. When a girl married, she took her
611 korobka, together with the property given her by her father or
[583] brothers, to her new home as a dowry and was allowed to dispose freely of it. At the same time her husband was not responsible for her debts.[10] When a married woman died, if childless, her
[428] korobka, as a rule, returned to her mother (matrilineal succession) and only if her mother was not alive, to her father. In some provinces the husband would inherit his wife's property if he lived with her four years or more.[11] If she had children, her property was inherited by both sons and daughters equally.[12]

Matriarchal traits are evident in contemporary folk philosophy and many folk customs in the Bielorussian villages as well as in some parts of the Ukraine. In the oral poetry of these
[772] people, for instance, the sun is represented as a female who is wooing the moon, her bridegroom. In some songs of these peasant folk the maidens contend with the male youths in duels and defeat them.[13] Even today in some of these regions it is often the girls who take the initiative in finding their suitors. During harvest festivals, it is the maidens who play the leading part. Traces
[583] of the capture of the bridegroom still persist in the folk customs of the Ukraine. In Ukrainian and Bielorussian folk poetry
[593] women, especially the mother, play a very significant role, while the place of the father is less outstanding. In popular opinion in this area, the consent of the mother in the marriage of a daughter is considered more important than that of the father.

582 Marriage among the Old-Slavonic peasant folk was endogamous within the village community and perhaps even within the joint household community (*verv, zadruga*)—not unlike in the Croatian zadruga of our days.[14] There was also, apparently,
593 a particularly developed brother-sister attachment as is manifested by brother-sister incest which seems to have taken place occasionally in some Russian regions until recently.[15] There were, therefore, abundant opportunities for emotional attachments in the Old-Slavonic family, since there were no external political, economic, or social pressures that might have disturbed internal equalitarian family relationships. Such relationships have persisted until present times in certain parts of Ukraine: